REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application and entry of this Amendment are solicited. Claims 1-11 remain active in the application subsequent to entry of this Amendment.

It is proposed to amend the claims in order to more particularly point out and distinctly claim that which applicants regard as their invention and also to agree the terminology used in the claims with that contained in the description of the invention. More specifically, claims 1, 10 and 11, all independent claims, are amended to define the manner in which the layer or layers of adhesive/coating composition are applied to the involved substrates. That is, a layer of a molten, fluid coating composition is applied by pumping the molten composition through the slot die. The procedure is described in [0014] and the term "fluid" may be found at [0013]. Consequential changes have been made to claim 7. The amendments made for the independent claims thus clarify and specifically define "slot coating" in a manner consistent with that contained in the description of the invention particularly with reference to the passages mentioned above.

Claims 10 and 11 are again rejected on the basis of prior art references of record as discussed in item 2 of the Official Action while remaining claims 1-8 and claim 9 are rejected based upon a similar combination of references (plus others) as explained in items 3 and 4 of the Official Action. Applicants again traverse both of these rejections.

In reviewing the comments describing and attempting to characterize the content of the applied references it appears the term "slot coating" may have perhaps inadvertently been given a meaning that may have been inconsistent with that contained in the description of the invention. The above amendments to the claims clearly define the operation as applying a layer of a molten, fluid coating composition which in its molten state is pumped and forced through a slot-shaped die. This procedure is in contrast to an extrusion process which starts with a solid polymer then, in the process of extruding, it is heated and liquefied, then forced through a slot-shaped die. These procedures will be recognized by one skilled in the art and are conveniently summarized and contrasted in [0004] of the description of applicants' invention.

In reviewing the comments in item 3 of the Official Action, applicants agree with the examiner's comment that the primary reference "Reith does not teach slot-coating a hot-melt adhesive (2) an underside surface of a primary backing". In fact, this reference merely refers to a

"hot melt adhesive in sheet form". In summarizing the document the Official Action refers to first and second "hot-melt adhesive layers" but, in fact, the reference itself refers to a "hot melt adhesive in sheet form"; *see* the passage at column 10, lines 11-14, column 6, line 11, column 4, line 62, the Abstract as well as various other aspects of the description in this document. The patentees discuss reaching an "activation temperature" of the hot melt adhesive; *see* column 2, line 3. Reith et al then goes on to state "The backings and composite hot melt adhesive are heated in contact to activate the adhesive with application of pressure sufficient to press the backing surfaces into the activated adhesive and cause tufted stitch encapsulation". Counsel understands this process to be bringing together various sheets or layers in full web form and pressing this composite under heated conditions in order to cause the hot melt adhesive to actually melt and flow. Applicants' understanding of the description of the Reith reference is consistent with the passage at column 12, lines 19-31, that is of "casting" adhesive compositions "into sheet form by pouring the heated, fluid composition onto a release paper", etc.

One of the secondary references, Goss, is said to describe use of "a slot die" (taken to be a slot coater), however, as mentioned on page 3, part (b) of the Official Action. Yet this would appear to be related to the use of an extruder which is different from applicants' process of using a molten, fluid coating composition and pumping it through a slot-shaped die onto the desired substrate.

Again, in item (c), page 3 of the Official Action, a "die-slot extrusion coater" is mentioned, but again this is not what is claimed in applicants' claims. It is incorrect to argue that Reith, which uses a particular device to form a hot-melt adhesive freestanding sheet is related to applicants' process of applying a molten, fluid coating composition by pumping that composition through a slot-shaped die and directly to the desired subject .

Responding to the examiner's comment regarding a showing of unexpected benefit, applicants have already addressed this point. Slot coaters provide a means to efficiently and precisely apply the desired amount of adhesive composition to the carpet but at a rate of application lower than that of other coating techniques including extrusion coating. This leads to strong, lightweight and more flexible products as a result of employing smaller quantities of adhesive, yet meet the necessary performance requirements and specifications, all as discussed in paragraph [0014] of the description.

Another, unexpected, benefit is efficient use of materials, namely the hot melt adhesive. The process of the invention provides for more accurate application of the hot melt adhesive thereby reducing coating costs.

For the above reasons it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this application define inventive subject matter. Reconsideration, entry of this Amendment and favorable action are solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By: _____

Arthur R. Crawford
Reg. No. 25,327

ARC:eaw
901 North Glebe Road, 11th Floor
Arlington, VA 22203-1808
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100